

REMARKS

Applicants have canceled claims 10 and 21, amended claims 1, 7, 11, 12, 18, and 22, and added new claims 23 and 24. claims 7 and 18 have been amended to correct a typographical error in their dependency on prior claims. In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration of the outstanding office action is respectfully requested.

The Office has rejected claims 1, 3-5, 7-10-16 and 18-22 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent No. 3,654,586 to Winkler (Winkler) and claims 1-3, 6, 12-14 and 17 under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by US Patent No. 6,383,032 to Gerberding (Gerberding). The Office asserts that Winkler discloses in figure 1 a connector with one or more interface passages (24, 26) formed in the housing (10), each of the interface passages (24, 26) having an outer perimeter (circumference of end 24, 26), wherein at least one portion of the outer perimeter (circumference of end 24, 26) is spaced in or spaced out (figure 2) from at least one adjacent portion of the outer perimeter (circumference of end of 24, 26). The Office asserts that Gerberding discloses (figure 1) a connector comprising a housing (10); one or more interface passages (20) formed in the housing (10), each of the interface passages (20) having an outer perimeter (circumference of 20).

Neither Winkler nor Gerberding, alone or in combination, teach or suggest, “wherein the electrical contact is spaced in from an opening to the interface passage at a distance to prevent an electrical connection between the electrical contact and a conductor at the opening to the interface passage” as recited in claims 1 and 12. As the Office has acknowledged by not rejecting dependent claim 10 based on Gerberding, Gerberding does not teach or suggest the electrical contact spaced in from an opening to the interface passage as claimed. With respect to Winkler, the Office’s attention is respectfully directed to FIG. 1 and col. 1, lines 40-42 in Winkler, which clearly illustrates that cable terminals 16 are very close to the openings to the U-shaped sockets 24 and 26. As a result, a conductor, such as an operator’s finger, placed near the openings to sockets 24 and 26 could form an electrical connection with the cable terminals 16. As disclosed in paragraphs 27 and 63 in the above-identified patent application, the electrical contacts 16(1) and 16(2) are located inside and spaced from an opening to each of the interface passages 18(1) and 18(2) to prevent an operator from accidentally contacting either of the energized contacts 16(1) and 16(2). As a

result, the present invention provides a safer design which can be utilized in hot plugging applications as disclosed in paragraph 6 in the above-identified patent application.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the Office is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejection of claims 1 and 12. Since claims 2-11 depend from and contain the limitations of claim 1 and claims 13-22, depend from and contain the limitations of claim 12, they are distinguishable over the cited references and are patentable in the same manner as claims 1 and 12.

Applicants respectfully request clarification with respect to the basis for the rejection of claims 11 and 22. It appears as if the Office intended to reject dependent claims 11 and 22 under 35 U.S.C. 103 as being obvious based on Winkler in view of US Patent No. 4,990,099 to Marin et al. (Marin). The Office has asserted that Marin discloses a portion of the interface passages 24, 26 spaced in from an outer perimeter of an opening 38 to the interface passages 24, 26 has an outer perimeter which differs from a configuration of the interface passage 24, 26 at the outer perimeter of opening 38.

Neither Winkler nor Marin, alone or in combination, teach or suggest, “wherein a portion of the interface passage spaced in from an opening to the interface passage has a configuration which differs from a configuration of the interface passage at the opening, wherein the interface passage is continuous” as recited in claim 11 or “wherein forming one or more interface passages further comprises forming a portion of the interface passage spaced in from an opening to the interface passage to have a configuration which differs from a configuration of the interface passage at the opening, wherein the interface passage is continuous” as recited in claim 22.

As the Office appears to have acknowledged, Winkler does not teach or suggest a portion of the interface passage spaced in from an opening to the interface passage has a first configuration which differs from a second configuration of the interface passage at the opening as claimed. With respect to Miram, the Office has cited to element 38 in Miram as an opening to the interface passages 24, 26, but as shown in FIG. 2 element 38 refers to the tail end of the auxiliary housing 22 with the wings 32. As illustrated and disclosed in FIGS. 4 and 5 and at col. 3, lines 34-39 in Miram, the wings 32 are designed to fit within corresponding slots 34 formed within a longitudinal bore 36 in the main housing 16 for each electrical connector 10 and 12. Accordingly, Miram only discloses male auxiliary receiving elements 24 and female electrical contact receiving elements 26 at one end of auxiliary housing 22 and wings 32 at another end of the auxiliary housing 22 which fit within slots 34

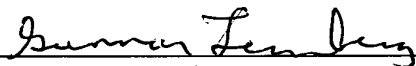
in the main housing 16 for each electrical connector 10 and 12, and does not disclose a continuous interface passage with the different configurations for the outer perimeters as claimed. Therefore, in view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, the Office is respectfully requested to reconsider and withdraw the rejection of claims 11 and 22.

Applicants have added new dependent claims 23 and 24 which are believed to be distinguishable over the cited references and in condition for allowance. A notice to this effect is respectfully requested.

In view of all of the foregoing, applicant submits that this case is in condition for allowance and such allowance is earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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